

## Modern versus Traditional Medical Approaches among Muslim in Malay World

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### Abstract

*One of the amazing discoveries that are based on Quran is the medical science discovery. In nowadays Malay community, some Muslim professional medical officers or 'medical doctor' apply the modern technology or devices to diagnose and treat patients; while some others prefer to use traditional techniques to cure illnesses. Hence, the medical approaches in the Malay Muslim world can be divided into two main categories: modern and traditional. This paper is intended to discuss, to compare and to present a survey result on the practice of the approaches in the Malay world, specifically in Malaysia. The research was done by reading materials and carried out a survey related to the medical practices of Malay Muslim people in Malaysia on 30 Malay Muslim respondents. Based on the majority result, it is found out that the respondents had high preference on the modern medical approach because it is more effective but in contra is lack of application of Islamic elements by the practitioner. Besides, they felt that Islam is encouraging more on modern medical approach and less on traditional approach because majority of them agree that the traditional medical practice contains negative practice of worshipping the evil. Overall, both the medical approaches have their own strength and weaknesses. Hence, it is up to a Muslim to either prefer the modern method or traditional method as long as it is not violating their religion belief.*

Keywords: medical approaches, Quran, medical practitioners, Malaysia

### 1.0 Introduction

Human are weak. Every human being, young or old, that lives in the earth will definitely be attacked by diseases. The diseases could come from various sources, like water, air, land and without permission or warning. Surely, we as a God's vicegerent on this earth has been endowed with mind and thought to find the cure. Rasulullah peace be upon him, said that there must be a cure to any diseases except for aging and death. Therefore, we are responsible to strive to find the cure rather than just relying solely.

Since immemorial, there are various type of treatments used to cure diseases. This involves the use of plants, animals and other natural sources. In the golden age of Islam (900 AD to 1300 AD) some Islamic scholars have discovered the natural science of medicine. The famous one include Al-Raziz (841-926 AD), Al-Zahrawi (931-1013 AD), Ibn-Sina (890-1037 AD), Ibn-Rusd (1126-1198 AD) and Ibn El-Nafis (1208-1288 AD). All of them have contributed a lot in the field of medicine through researches and investigations. Many theories have been discovered by Islamic scientists, for instance Ibn Sina (Avicenna among the west) has discussed about diseases such as tetanus, pleuritic, anthrax and diabetes correctly. He was also able to list in details about the medications and methods of production appropriate to the type of diseases. In addition, he has published 456 books and the most famous one is Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb which has become a reference for 600 years in Europe and the Islamic State. Hence, the origin of medical science actually begins from the Islamic civilization but has been inferred and introduced by the west as their discoveries.

Next, the Malay world refers to the countries with a high population of Malay (or Malay rooted) race people [1]. Malaysia is one of the country, constitutes of 63.1% of Malay in Peninsular Malaysia in year 2010 [1]. Among all of Malaysia citizen, 63.1% of them are Muslim with majority are of Malay race [1]. Malaysia or formerly known as “Tanah Melayu” practicing traditional treatment system like pawang or shaman services to cure illnesses [2]. During the colonization of British, they started to get modern treatment to replace existing traditional treatment. Nevertheless, not all traditional treatment methods practiced is pleasing. For instance, some of the past shaman use evil spirit to cure disease, for example they practically used stuffs like incense, village chicken eggs, lime, and yellow rice coupled with spells during performing the treatment [2]. Nowadays, this kind of method will be an option after modern treatment is not able to cure the disease. Village people especially, might prefer to get the shaman service due to some reasons. However, not all the traditional treatments are using the services of genie and devils to cure diseases. There are some traditional medical practitioners who are using proper treatment approaches. Therefore, this paper will focus on the proper traditional medical practice which adopting the ethics of Islam in their method of treatment.

### **1.1 Objectives**

Since one of the amazing discoveries that are based on Quran is the medical science discoveries, we are keen on relating the different types of medical approaches of Malaysia Malay Muslim with the relation on application of the Islamic elements. Hence, our objectives are:

- i. To study the two different medical approaches, namely modern and traditional among Malay Muslim in Malaysia
- ii. To determine the application of Quran or Islamic values among the practitioners
- iii. To present a survey result done on Malay Muslim as respondents, to investigate their perception on questions related to the above objectives

### **1.2 Scope of Study**

The scope of our study is as shown in Figure 1. This paper focuses on the sub-theme of science in the Malay world. The ‘science’ will be discussed in this paper is the medical science – modern and traditional approaches, while Malaysia is the chosen Malay world.

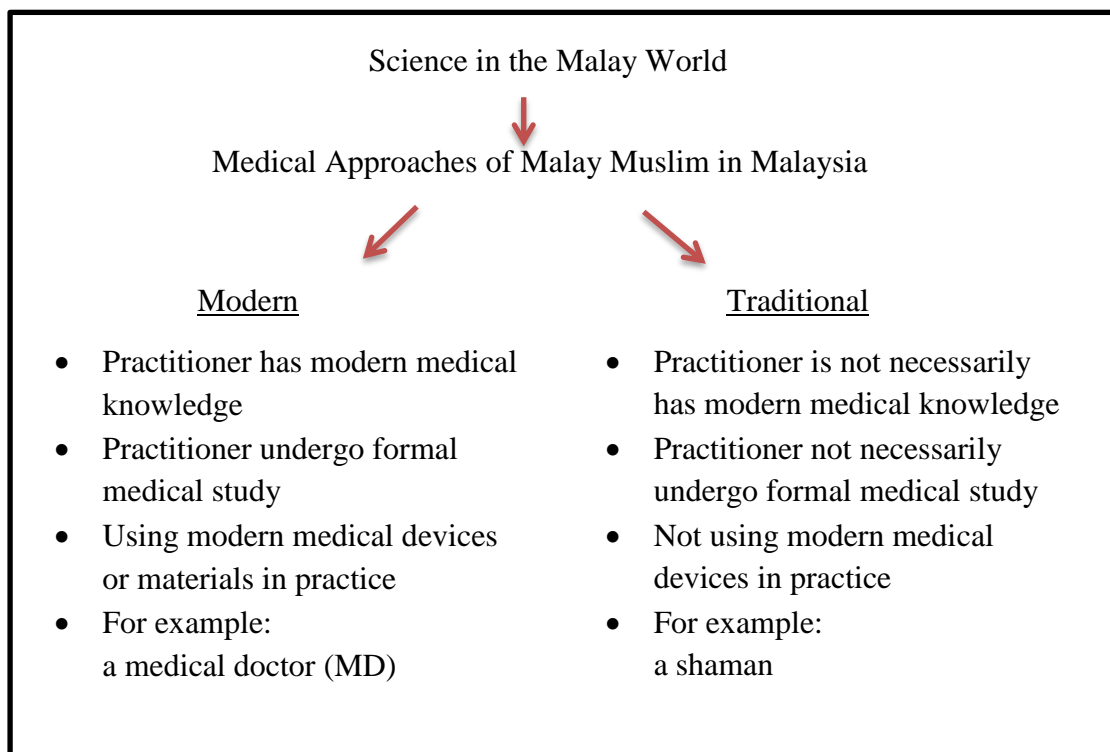


Figure 1: Scope of Study

The traditional medical approach is actually a wide field of medical practice. It is not only refers to the Malay practice of medicine in the past, but also generally refers to any medical-related approach by the Malay Muslim to treat or prevent illnesses which is not using modern instrumentation.

## 2.0 Modern Medical Approach

As mentioned in our scope of study, the modern medical approach is practice by a person who undergone formal medical study to be a medical doctor or nurses or operator, and is using modern instrumentation in treating a patient. This section will discuss some background on the modern medicine approach.

### 2.1 Origin of Modern Medicine in Malaysia

“Tanah Melayu” has been colonized about hundred years by foreign country started with Portugese, Nertherlands, British, Japan and lastly with the British again. History stated that the British colonized longer compare to others [3]. This colonization has given big influence on “Tanah Melayu” socioeconomic. One of the impacts is on the health sector development in urban and rural areas.

Before the colonization of British in “Tanah Melayu”, Malay people practiced traditional medicine and believe on shaman in curing diseases. However, during the British colonization the modern medicine such as doctor, nurse, clinic and hospital has been introduced to the Malay people. Intentionally, the introducing of hospital during at that time was to treat the farm workers, tin mine workers and people that had been infected with

malaria, beri-beri, cholera and others diseases [3]. Since, the workers need to pay fifty cent a year to get the treatment, it received poor response from Malay people initially.

During nineteenth century many hospitals have been built in Perak. There are about fifteen hospitals located at Taiping, Teluk Intan, Tapah, Sungai Siput, Slim River, Sri Manjung, Selama, Parit Buntar, Kuala Kangsar, Kampar, Ipoh, Grik, Changkat Melintang, Batu Gajah, dan Tanjung Rambutan [3]. In 1880, the first hospital has been built in Taiping known as Yeng Wah Hospital. This hospital has X-ray facility. Due to many infectious diseases identified, the medical research institutes had been built in 1900. This institutes aims to determine the cause of infectious and the treatment for go against the diseases. Besides that, it is also to find the effective ways for controlling the disease that cause by the lack of food, smallpox and rabies diseases. In 1928 the division of entomology and advisory board malaria has established for research purpose. After that, the bacteria, pathology and biochemist and food division had introduced in order to improve the people health.

The health service in Sarawak had started during the Brooke mastery in order to give treatment to Europe officer and their family [3]. Local girls were trained to be nurse and midwife in Kuching. During the colonial times, the services of medical treatment in Sarawak had focused on urban areas. In the meantime, health services in Sabah established by the North Borneo Chartered Company who ruled the Sabah from 1881 until 1942.

Next, the first governmental dental clinic was build in 1929 at Jalan Silang (formerly known as Jalan Tun Tan Siew Sin), Kuala Lumpur. In 1929, the dental training college was established at Penang for training the nurse, dental technologist and surgery dental assistants. This establishment aims to improve the dental services. The first nursing college established at Penang was in 1947 and followed by the opening of hostel for nurse by Sir Mc Donald known as Nursing School of Penang [3]. The college had started with new curriculum likes basis training and basic post training (Paediatrics course, Obstetrics course, Intensive Care course, Coronary course and Perioperative course).

Ulu Kinta Medical Assistant College is the second institution that had been established in Peninsular Malaysia to train the medical assistants in order to meet the needs and health services in Malaysia. The college located in three different states which are in Seremban, Kuching, and Alor Star. The Ulu Kinta College officially operated on 1 January in 1992 with the presence of 6 trainers. On 13 January 1992, the college started with 50 participants only. In 1970, it trained the hospital assistants, and the manpower planning and training has decided to make the college to train the medical assistants which follow the new standard of curriculum in 1992.

According to Malaysia seventh plan, government has approved the construction of five allied health sciences college under the Ministry of Health [3]. The college situated in Sungai Buloh, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Johor Bahru and Ulu Kinta. It provides six training such as nursing, radiography and radiotherapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, pharmacy assistants and health environment. This establishment objective is to plant the positive attitude, good personality, innovative person and always ready to face the competition during this globalization time.

After independence, the government gives more attention on improving the socio-economic of rural population. When Malaysia gained independence on 1957, the country has about 65 hospitals. The Ministry showed excellent performance in maintaining the health of

Malaysians during the independence period. In 20 years of independence, started on 1957 until 1977, government take various actions in order to improve the people health such as establish the general health centres, clinics and others.

The pharmacy services were developed by the establishment of medical lab and medical store at Petaling Jaya in 1964. Due to rapid development of pharmaceutical services, the Pharmaceutical Services Division (BPF) was established in 1974 to give more comprehensive pharmaceutical services to Malaysians. The national chemistry medical control lab (MKKUK) under the BPF was responsible for carrying out the tests for pharmaceutical products. In 1992, the MKKUK has been renamed to Control Bureau National Pharmaceutical (BPFK) due to its function as a regulatory agencies pharmaceuticals and as a secretariat to the Drug Control Authority (DCA) [3].

The Ministry of Health also takes action in the recovery of social issues and the development of community. The Social Welfare Department had been placed under the Ministry of Health in two periods started from 1956 to 1957 and 1960 to 1962. During the merger time, the ministry was known as Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The first minister was B. Dato 'V.T. Sambathan (1957-1959) [3]. However, starting from 1963 the ministry had changed their name to the Ministry of Health Malaysia again until now.

The Ministry of Health takes action every year by increasing the facilities that will be used to improve the treatment of Malaysians. It becomes a role model for other countries in Cardiology and Geriatric field. Nowadays, the ministry focuses more on providing, accessibility and improving the quality of facilities. This development is in line with the globalization of health technology, liberalization of disease and the development of medical technology in the world.

## 2.2 Modern Medicine Branches

Table 1 shows some of the modern medicine branches that play important roles in maintaining the human health [4].

Table 1: The branch of modern science

<b>TYPES</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Anatomy	Study the physical structures of the organism
Biochemistry	Study of the chemistry that takes place in living organisms likes their function and structure
Biomechanics	Study of the biological system in their structure and function
Biostatics	The application of statistic in medical field for analyzing the data
Biophysics	Study of the biological science with the physic and physical chemistry
Cytology	Study of the microscopic individual cells
Embryology	Study of the early development of organisms
Endocrinology	Study of the hormones and the effect on organisms
Epidemiology	Study of the demographic of diseases processes
Genetics	Study of the genes and their role in biological inheritance
Histology	Study of the biological tissues
Immunology	Study of the immune system for human health purpose
Medical Physics	Study of the applications of physics principles in medicine

Microbiology	Study of the microorganisms such as protozoa, bacteria, fungi and viruses
Molecular biology	Study of the molecular of genetic material
Neuroscience	Study of human nervous system
Nutrition science	Study of the effect of food and drink on human health
Pathology	Study of the causes, course, progression and resolution thereof the diseases
Pharmacology	Study of the drugs and it actions
Photobiology	Study of the interactions between non-ionizing radiation and living organisms
Physiology	Study of the functions of body and the underlying regulatory mechanisms

### 2.3 Types of Modern Medicine and Its Side Effect

This section will discuss the types of modern medicine and their side effects on human. Generally modern medicine can be divided into 4 different types which are analgesics, antibiotics (antibacterial medicine), psycho therapeutics medicine and hormone and steroid [5].

#### i. Analgesics or painkillers

- Relieve pain but do not cure the disease
- For examples are the aspirin, paracetamol and codeine
- Aspirin and paracetamol can be categorized as mild painkillers whereas codeine is a powerful painkiller
- Aspirin
  - A pain relief and anti-inflammatory action
  - The IUPAC name of aspirin is acetyl aslicylec acid [5]
  - It contains two functional groups which are carboxylic acid group and the ester group
  - Commonly used to reduce fever, relieve headaches, muscle aches and joint aches. Besides, it can be used to treat arthritis (a disease caused by inflammation of the joints) and act as an anticoagulant which can prevent the clotting of blood and reduce the risk of the heart attack and strokes
  - Sides effect of taking prolong this medicine include bleeding in the stomach, allergic reactions, skin rashes and asthmatic attacks
  - These situations happen because aspirin is very acidic
- Paracetamol
  - Neutral and not as acidic as aspirin
  - The functions are similar like the aspirin in reducing fever and relieve pain but it does not reduce inflammation.
  - Also used to relieve flu symptoms such as fever, bone aches and runny nose
  - Have same side effects as aspirin

- Codeine
  - An organic compound which contains the elements like carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen
  - It is an analgesic and used to relieve moderate pain
  - It is more powerful than morphine and categorized as narcotic drugs [5]
  - Also used in cough mixtures to relieve coughs
  - Excessive taking can cause addiction
  
- ii. Antibiotics (antibacterial medicine)
  - Chemicals that destroy or prevent the growth of infectious microorganism.
  - Two examples are penicillin and streptomycin.
  - They are used to treat the diseases that are caused by bacteria but are not effective to fight against diseases caused by viral infections such as influenza, measles or smallpox
  - Penicillin
    - Used to treat diseases that caused by bacteria such as pneumonia, gonorrhea and syphilis while
    - Can cause allergic reactions and death on people that are allergic to it
  - Streptomycin
    - Effective in treating tuberculosis
    - Can cause nausea, vomiting, dizziness, rashes and fever
    - Also can cause loss of hearing if taken in long term
  
- iii. Psycho-therapeutic medicines
  - Used for treating person that has mental and emotional illnesses
  - It can be classified as drugs and divided into a few groups: stimulants, amphetamine, prozac anti-depressant and chlorpromazine antipsychotic agents
  - Stimulants
    - Excite the activity of the brain and central nervous system, making a person more alert, more energetic, less tired and more cheerful
    - Examples are caffeine and amphetamines
  - Amphetamines
    - Increase the respiration, heart rate and blood pressure and can make person to stay-up
    - Side effects of this medicine is addiction
  - Psycho-therapeutic medicines
    - Antidepressants
    - Depression caused by imbalance of the chemical in the brain and considered as a chronic illness
    - The person that has this disease will feel hopeless and loss of interest in doing daily activities. It has relation between the amounts of special chemicals in the brain and a person's mood. The person feels depressed if the chemicals amount get too low and reversely.
    - Also can make person feel sleepy and calm
    - The side effect is addiction, headaches, grogginess and loss of appetite

- Antipsychotic medicines
  - Used to cure person that is psychosis
  - Psychosis is the serious mental illness in which people lose touch with reality
  - The symptoms are hearing voice, delusions and hallucination
  - Psychosis can be classified into schizophrenias (madness), psychotic depression, mania and so on [5]
  - The persons that have this disease have extreme mood swings in which their mood change rapidly from high spirit to deep depression
  - These types of medicine help the person to live more peaceful and calm
  - The side effects of this disease are dry mouth, blurred vision, urinary retention, constipation, tremor, restlessness and sedation

iv. Hormone and steroid

- Can be used to treat the mental and emotional illness
- There are two groups of steroid which are steroid anabolic and corticosteroid [5].
- Example of hormone in human body is insulin that is commonly useful to treat the diabetes disease.
- Steroid anabolic is used to treat cancer and AIDS. Example of steroid group is Metandrostenolone (Dianabol) and Testosteronpropionat (Testex) [6].
- The corticosteroid, such as cortisone and prednisone has anti inflammation characteristics and used to treat asthma and arthritis rheumatoid (joint illness).

### 3.0 Traditional Medical Approach

Malay traditional medical approach refers to medical method of the Malay society inherited since immemorial until today. In old days, the medical method does not require individual with medicine (modern) knowledge like Biology and Physiology because knowledge on method of treating patient is only passes from one generation to another generation. Apart from that, sophisticated modern equipment is also not necessarily required to treat patient.

#### 3.1 Origin

According to Haliza (2000), traditional medical method of the Malay society has no source of information or founder that is exact and complete [7]. There are various opinions on this medicine arrival history source. Among them:

- i. Royal shaman of Kelantan, Nik Dir bin Abd. Rahman said that the first Malay shaman exist since Prophet Adam's time, Roland Werner (1986)
- ii. A shaman in Kelantan explain that Malay medical derived from someone who called Lukmanul Hakim, Gimlette (1915)
- iii. Muhammad Saleh was the first pawang (*diviner*) that can be identified, Abdullah (1927)

#### 3.2 Development of Malay Traditional Medical Approach

There are mainly three phases of development of the approach [8]:

- i. Early stage
- ii. Hindhu-Buddha religion arrival
- iii. Acceptance of Islam



The early stage refers to the time when the Malay not yet exposed to any religion (of trust to God). In other word, they are either atheist or animism. At this stage, most of them believed in the existence of ghost and spirits [8]. Hence, the traditional medical practice started with various spells used to cure illness which was believed to have relation with the supernatural [8].

When the Hindu-Buddha religion arrived in the Malay world, the influence of that religion was absorbed into the traditional medical field. Thus, their spells or incantation turned into what they called as mantra, with the Hindu-Buddha elements, such as the gods and goddesses concept [8].

Finally, when the Malay world welcome the coming of Islam religion, thus they also adapted their traditional medical practice with Islamic practices, such as by reading 'Bismillahirrahmanirrahim' before starting a treatment and ending it with other Quran verses. Some of the spells were changed to dua or verses from Quran and Hadis [8]. Some of them also, undeniably, asked for Allah help to grant their wish to cure patient.

Nevertheless, in today era, after the arrival of Islam in the Malay world, more and more adaptation and development or changes are observable. For instance, the exploration on the usage and various functions of plants, such as herbs as medicine is also a type of traditional medical approach. Practically, more and more researches are done on the use of plants especially to cure or prevent diseases. Beside, this also causing the increase in the number of health products introduces.

### **3.3 Philosophy**

There are two types of Malay medical philosophy namely life philosophy and health philosophy [7]. The health philosophy can be divided into twelve concepts or beliefs [7] as follow:

#### **i) Life philosophy**

##### **a) Belief in the Creator**

- The ultimate Creator and Healer is Allah
- Allah will also make the decision on one's life or death (as stated in Surah al Hadid, verse 2)

##### **b) The 'two contrary' concept**

- This is the concept of the belief of Islam that, everything is created in pairs
- Likewise, if there is a will there is a way; if there is disease there is antidote or medicine for it

##### **c) The 'each one requires each other' concept**

- Everything needs other things as a complement.
- For instance, human need the nature, and the nature also need human
- The Malay believes that human have to balance their life with their environment
- Although human are gifted with mind, they could not destroy the other creatures or disturb the natural ecosystem of the world

##### **d) Claim that 'knowledge searching is compulsory'**

- Islam encourage the believers to diligently search for knowledge

- Search of knowledge will let human find out and realize the fact of a thing, including the reality of Allah creations and occurrence of events
- e) Life concept and soul
  - Malay people also belief in the concept of life and soul
  - Human are believed to has a body with physical limitation and a soul, which conversely has the ability to explore the supernatural world
- f) Belief to spirit
  - Spirit also refers to the soul, the energy and forces that one has
  - There are positive spirit which leads to the force and energy to do good things as well as negative spirit which leads to bad attitudes or weaknesses
- g) Guardian
  - This is about the belief that there are invisible guardians which are created to help human
- h) Phantom, genie and devil
  - Phantom or ghost, genie and devil are believed to coexist in this world. They are said as some of the invisible guardians who responsible in destroying human faith
- i) Earth have four elements
  - The four elements of Earth are soil (land), water, air and flame.
  - All of these elements are required by human beings since each of them have their own characteristics
- j) Nature inhering balance
  - The nature exist in balance, which means the elements are always in equilibrium with each other as planned by God
  - Everything will go through a process: from nothing to something, from early stage to middle and the end and finally die and gone from this world
- k) People need life's values
  - The shaman said that the nature and human are created to follow some rules, whereby the nature moves according to the 'law of nature', while human move according to mind and rules
  - Human mind can evaluate what is logic and what is not whereas the rules will decide what is good and what is bad
- l) Respect to parents
  - Islam demanded human to do good deeds to their parents. This is one of Allah command to human beings (as stated in Surah Luqman, verse 14)

Health philosophy of the Malay involves prevention and cure [8]. As the saying goes 'prevention is better than cure', it is recommended that we try to live a healthy lifestyles to prevent getting sick.

### **3.4 Traditional Medicine Practitioners**

In the past, some or most of the Malay traditional medicine practitioners did not have high formal education level. Only some of them were affordable to study up to a higher level. Hence, the traditional medicine knowledge is not much developing and expose to the public knowledge.

In contrast, the traditional medicine nowadays has received some parties or people interest. For example, more and more health-focused companies are producing health products for traditional treatment and even some medical Doctors today are interested to use traditional approach and herbs to cure patients instead of using the modern instrument. Meanwhile, some people who have strong religious belief or education are applying traditional medical approach using Islamic medicine.

Based on a research paper, entitled ‘The Practice of Traditional Medicine in Malaysia: Observations on Culture and Ethnicity’, submitted in the National Seminar on Uses of Traditional and Alternative Medicine in Contemporary Health Care, organized by the Institute for Medical Research, supported by World Health Organization (WHO) on 22-24 December 1997, it is claimed that the traditional medical knowledge of Malay are facing endangered [9]. The reasons include reduced number of specialist, lack of knowledge, research, commercialization and knowledge transfer, as well as resistance of elders or secrecy [9].

### **4.0 Science and Religion**

Various studies done by researcher have proven religious truth, especially Islamic religion in the area of science. This reflects that religion not only as a ritual but also as daily life practice. Noble values and Islamic teachings should be practiced in any life activities. Likewise with medical practice, whether modern or traditional, Muslim medical practitioners should insert the values and element of Islam when treating a patient.

#### **4.1 Muslim Medical Doctor Ethics**

Religion does not forbid Muslims to seek knowledge, especially with regard to the people benefit. The medical field is one of the most important areas that need to be studied by Muslims to produce more doctors that apply the elements of Islam in treating the patients. The Muslim doctor should not only has knowledge and skills in medication but should also has present good attitude and politeness with others especially with their patient [10]. They should practice this ethics when facing the patients and problems. To do that, first of all, a Muslim doctor should has a strong faith and believe in Allah s.w.t and prophet in whatever situation [10]. They should know what is halal and haram in practicing their knowledge.

Secondly, they should have high knowledge and skill in facing the patient [10]. As we know, different people have their own attitudes. They should always be patient, smile, fair and calm when treating the patients. Thirdly, they should has a noble character, soft-spoken and polite [10]. Doctors and nurses must believe that the life and death of person is on the knowledge of Allah s.w.t., and that medical officers are only as a medium from Allah s.w.t in order to treat the disease and so they do not have power in determining the age of a person and the recovery of a disease. They must believe that all things happened based on permission from Allah s.w.t..

Next, a doctor should become a role model to other people in practicing a good lifestyles [10]. For example, they themselves have to exercise, not smoking, not eating fast foods and cut off other bad lifestyles. Besides that, they must be sincere and truthful in speech, writing and done reports in whatever situation [10]. Other than that, the doctor should have sufficient knowledge about Islamic law and jurisprudence in order to advise the patients about the procedures or method that will be used in the treatment [10]. A doctor must be *tawaduq*, low self-esteem and does not be *ujub*, ripple or arrogant person. Lastly, they should also follow the progress and development of medical science in order to equip themselves with the new, modern and up-to-date methods of testing and treatment.

#### **4.2 Application of Islamic Values in Malay Modern Medical Practitioner**

Modern medicine is based on the scientific research without any assumptions and must have evidence in proving the facts [11]. Although the modern practitioner is a great person but they must remember where their knowledge is come from. Nowadays, many people admires on doctor profession, they thought that the person that become a doctor is an intelligent, great and perfect person. Besides that many of the disease can be treat by using modern medicine. However they should believe that all of that come from Allah s.w.t [7]. Islam does not prohibited their people in finding various treatment even they should find a cure to treat the disease.

The modern medicine should have these four main principles. Firstly they should believe that the disease come from Allah and also cure with the Allah s.w.t permission [7]. The treatment should not associate Allah s.w.t in what situation. The practitioner and patients need to understand that they were just trying, but the real healer is Allah s.w.t.. Next, the method and medicine used should follow the rules that had been states in Quran and Sunnah, halal and clean [7]. In the emergency case, it must be evaluated by two Muslim people in order to get the opinion in using the prohibited things. Thirdly, the method of treatment should be done with harmonious and orderly [7]. Lastly, the medicine materials must not cause harm to the patient and nurse.

#### **4.3 Application of Islamic Values in Malay Traditional Medical Practitioner**

Due to the effect of various factors on the Malay traditional medical practice since years ago until today, the pattern or method of practices might be varies among all the practitioners.

In fact, one of the main factors majorly affecting the Malay community is the coming of Islam to the Malay world. Afterward, many of the Malay lifestyles were adapted to Islamic lifestyle. This is of course includes their way in traditional medical practice.

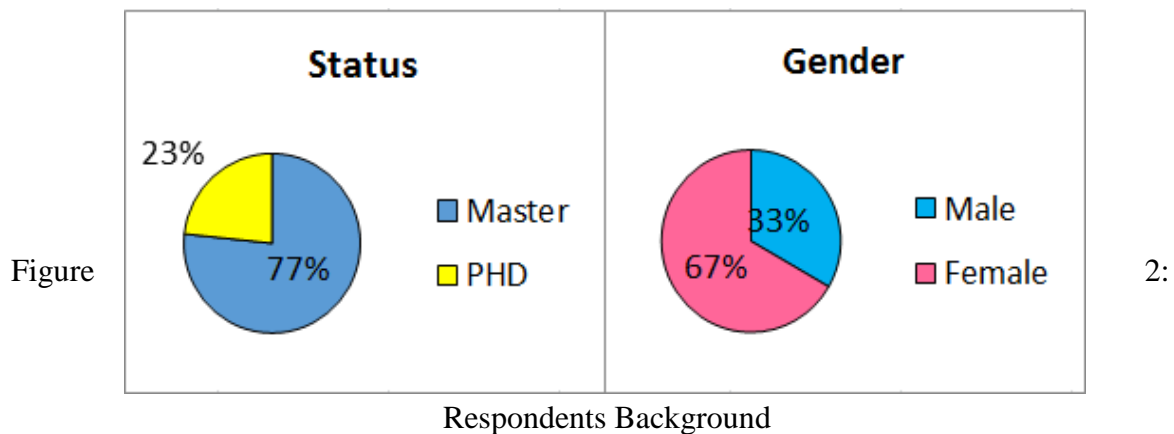
It is obviously observable that the traditional medicine practitioners are applying Islamic practice. For example, most of them are using verses in Quran, like the Du'a before or while performing their treatment. This is more true when most of their treatment philosophy revolve around the belief in Allah as the main healer for all illness [7, 12].

Furthermore, the Quran itself has stated some materials or foods which are beneficial for human health. For instance, the olive oil and honey are mentioned as nutritious and could help treat various illnesses. As a consequence, some of the traditional medical practitioner

(who belief in the Quran) thus uses them in their traditional treatment and so more and more Sunnah-based healthy products are developed.

## 5.0 A Small Survey

A survey is done on 18 November 2014, on 30 respondents, fixed from Malay Muslim in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Among them, 20 are female and 10 are male. Most of them are postgraduate students from Faculty of Electrical Engineering (FKE), with 23 Master students and 7 PHD students. The summarized details of background of the respondents are shown in Figure 2,



The objective of the survey is to study the general perception of the respondents on the modern and traditional medical practices of Malay Muslim in Malaysia.

## 5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire distributed is as shown in the Appendix. It consists of 15 close ended questions (except for question 5 which is partially close ended) and is written in Malay language. The lists of the questions are:

### Part A: (Yes / No)

- i. You have received treatment from practitioners of modern medicine ( Malay Muslim)
- ii. You have received treatment from practitioners of traditional medicine ( Malay Muslim)
- iii. Practitioners of the modern medicine apply Islamic elements such as reciting verses of the Koran during treatment
- iv. Practitioners of the traditional medicine apply Islamic elements such as reciting verses of the Koran during treatment
- v. The Malay community practice more modern medicine / traditional / other:\_\_\_\_

## Part B: (Agree / Less agree / Not Agree / Not Sure)

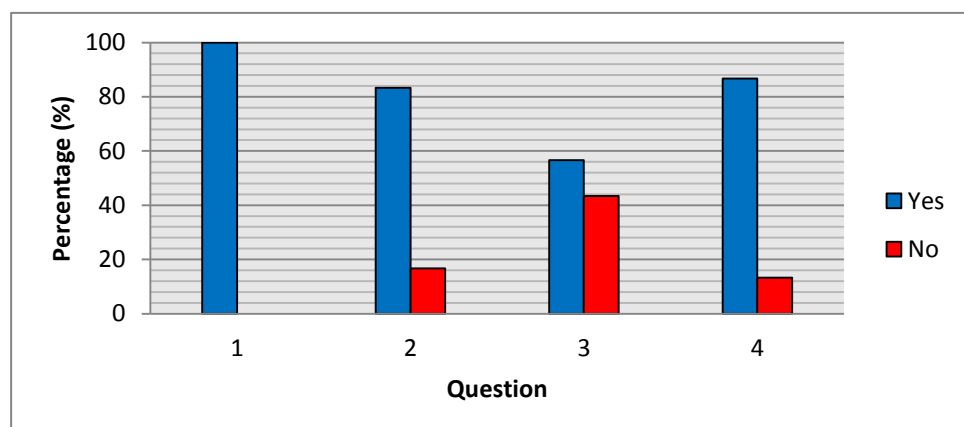
- vi. Some traditional medical practice include elements of worship ( such as involving spirits and demons )
- vii. Traditional medicine is encouraged in Islam
- viii. Modern medicine is encouraged in Islam
- ix. Modern medicine is more effective than traditional
- x. Traditional medicine is more effective than modern
- xi. Modern medicine should be applied with the elements of Islamic
- xii. Traditional medicine should be applied with the elements of Islamic
- xiii. Modern medicine should be combined with traditional medicine and Islam
- xiv. Islamic medicine is using modern medical science
- xv. Islamic medicine is using traditional medical science

## 5.2 Result and Discussion

The survey results are as presented in Figure 3, 4 and 5.

Referring to Figure 3, generally majority of the respondents have received traditional and modern medicine treatment, and they claimed that both modern and traditional medicine practitioners do applied Islamic elements during their practice. In details, all of the respondents (100%) ever received modern medicine treatment, while only 83% of them have received traditional medicine treatment previously. This result indirectly shows that the respondents mainly prefer the modern medical treatment, or firstly will refer to the modern medicine practitioner before going to the alternative option. In contrast, the percentage of respondents who agreed that the traditional medical practitioner apply Islamic elements, like reciting dua during treatment, is higher than the application by the modern medical practitioner, which is 87% and 57% respectively. This result shows a contrary; whereby the respondents felt that the modern medical practitioners apply less Islamic elements in their practice, but most of them prefer to undergo modern treatment rather than traditional treatment. This may due to the large number and easily found of the modern medical center like hospitals or clinics.

Figure 3:  
Respond for  
Questions 1-



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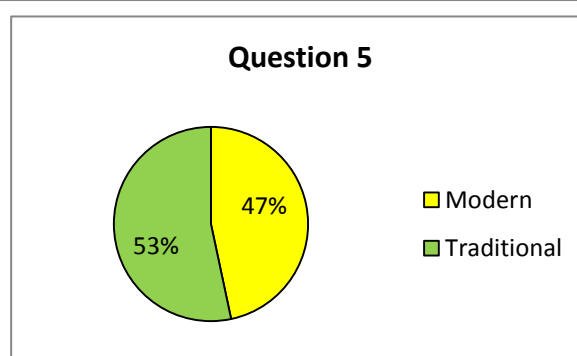
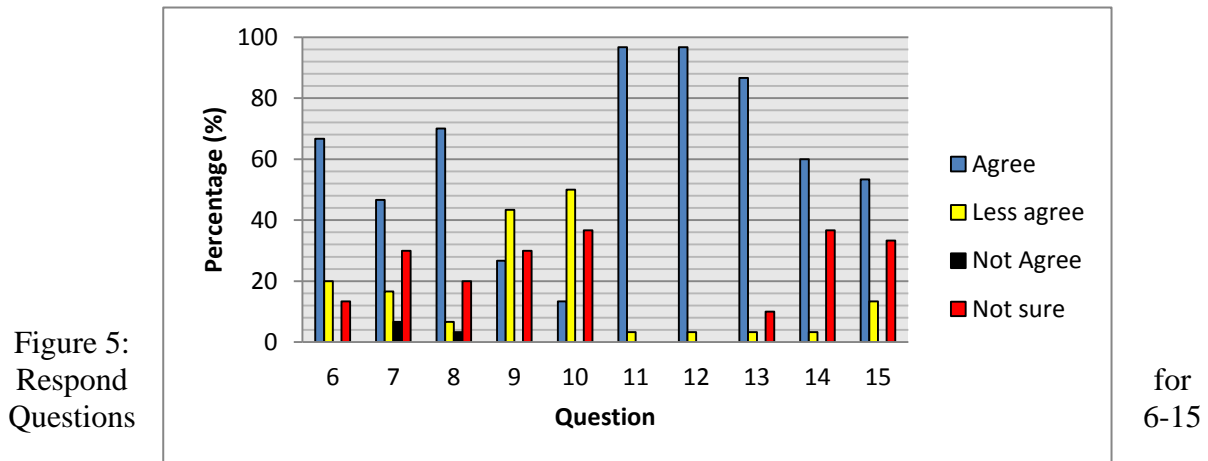


Figure 4: Respond for Question 5

Next, the respondents were asked about their opinion on the types of medical approaches largely practice by the Malay community in question 5 (refer to Figure 4). The respond is, majority with 53% of them felt that most Malay medical practitioners are using traditional approach. However, the percentage of different in number is only 6%. Therefore, it can be said that the Malay community practice both modern and traditional medical approaches with approximately equal in number.

Based on Figure 5, for question 6, a high percentage of 67% of the respondents agree that many of the traditional medical approach involve elements of worship to something else not Allah. None of them disagree with the statement, 20% less agrees while only 13% of them were not sure. The high percentage of this negative assumption of the traditional medical approach is probably another main reason why most of the respondents prefer modern medical approach although they felt that it applies less Islamic elements.



Another interesting finding is in questions 7 and 8. A higher percentage of respondents agreed that modern medicine is encouraged in Islam compare to the traditional medicine, with 70% and 47% respectively. This means that they felt that Islam encourage more on modern medical approach rather than the traditional one.

When asked which of the medical approaches they think is more effective (in questions 9 and 10), majority of the respondents (with 27% agree, 43% less agree) felt that the modern medical approach is more effective than the traditional medical approach (with 13% agree, 50% less agree). This finding could be another reason for their higher preference on the modern medicine.

In addition, in question 11-13, most of the respondents (97%) agree that both modern and traditional medicine should be combined with Islamic elements. Besides, 87% agree that modern medical approach should be combined with the traditional medicine as well as Islamic elements.

Finally, in question 14 and 15, the respondents were indirectly asked about their understanding on Islamic medicine. 60% of them agree that it is using modern medical approach, while 53% agree that it is using traditional medical approach. This finding is answering their opinion in questions 7 and 8, whereby majority of them felt that Islam

encourage more on the modern medical approach and hence many of them agree that the Islamic medical approach is more on utilizing the modern approach.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The modern medical approach gives people an impression of high technology medical instrumentations, with experts' medical doctors and advance medical sciences. Furthermore, the modern medicine has more or wide coverage of media and knowledge or information exposure. There are hospitals and clinics everywhere. Hence, undeniably, around the world, majority of people will firstly prefer this type of medical practice. The survey we conducted also proves the same scenario since all of the respondents have received modern medical treatment in their lifetime.

Focusing on the traditional medical approach, specifically in the Malay community, the traditional medical approach has gone through several changes and developments. The practice of this approach before the arrival of Islam in the Malay world has given some negative perceptions on people until today. For instance, majority of the survey' respondents felt that the traditional medical approach involve worship of the demons. Yes, in the past, some of their medical practices involved the worship of spirit or ghost or the supernatural. Even after the arrival of Islam, some of those bad elements might still hiddenly exist in some of their practice. We believed that this bad impression of traditional medical approach is the main factor giving rises to people perception that modern medical approach is better and more effective, and that Islam encouraged modern medical approach more compare to traditional approach, and thus the Islamic medicine is mainly applying the modern medical approach.

Once again, traditional medical approach of the Malay community has undergone many changes. The term 'traditional medical approach' is not only referring to the practice of medicine by the people in the past. As long as it is not using modern methods or instrumentation, the type of the medical practice is defined as traditional. In fact, many of the Malay traditional medical approach has developed into using natural sources like herbs, remedy, massage or healthy products, or Sunnah products as well as Islamic medical way of using recitation of Quran and dua. In this case, the habits of using demon worship or black spells is not included.

Hence, people should be clear of the actual meaning of the traditional medical practice so that they could remove the negative thinking of the practice in the past. This is important because traditional medical approach do has its own strengths. For instance, some of the chronic disease like some cancers, which is hard (and expensive) to be cure through modern treatment could be treat with traditional method of using natural Sunnah food, such as honey. Thus, Islam is not only encouraging modern medicine but also traditional medicine. Plus, Islamic medicine is not only mainly using modern method but also traditional method.

Last but not least, both modern and traditional medical approaches by Malay Muslim in Malaysia are competence with each other. In other words, they have their own strengths. Yet, nothing is more powerful than Allah decision and plan. If the time comes, no one could escape from death. Therefore, the medical practitioners (specifically in this case study is a Muslim) could try their best, with lots of effort, but they should never forget to ask for Allah help and will to be able to cure or even formulate medicine for prevention purpose.



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## Appendix

### Sample of Questionnaire

Assalamualaikum dan salam sejahtera, kami adalah mahasiwa Sarjana Falsafah dari Fakulti Kejuruteraan Elektrik, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, UTM Johor Bahru yang mengambil kursus Falsafah Sains dan Ketamadunan Islam (UHW6023), seksyen 4, semester 1, sesi 2014/2015, di bawah bimbingan Prof. Madya Dr. Aminuddin bin Ruskam.

Pihak kami memohon jasa baik dan kerjasama pihak Tuan/Puan/Encik/Cik bagi melengkapkan soal selidik ringkas ini untuk menjayakan kajian untuk seminar kami yang bertajuk "Modern versus Traditional Medical Approaches among Muslim in Malay World".

Berdasarkan objektif:

- Mengkaji amalan perubatan moden dan tradisional dalam kalangan masyarakat Melayu Islam di Malaysia
- Mengenal pasti amalan penerapan Quran atau nilai-nilai Islamik dalam kalangan pengamal perubatan Melayu di Malaysia

**Bahagian A: Latar Belakang**

- Bangsa: Melayu
- Agama: Islam
- Status: Master / PHD / Pensyarah
- Jantina: L / P

**Definisi:**

- Pengamal perubatan moden**  
– pengamal perubatan yang menggunakan peralatan atau ilmu moden atau barat, contohnya: Doktor Perubatan (MD)
- Pengamal perubatan tradisional**  
– pengamal perubatan yang tidak memerlukan peralatan atau ilmu moden, dan tidak semestinya seorang Doktor Perubatan

**Bahagian B: Sila tick (/) yang berkenaan**

Pernyataan	Ya	Tidak
1. Anda pernah mendapat rawatan daripada pengamal perubatan moden (berbangsa Melayu Muslim)		
2. Anda pernah mendapat rawatan daripada pengamal perubatan tradisional (berbangsa Melayu Muslim)		
3. Pengamal perubatan moden tersebut menerapkan unsur Islamik seperti membaca ayat-ayat Al-Quran semasa rawatan		
4. Pengamal perubatan tradisional tersebut menerapkan unsur Islamik seperti membaca ayat-ayat Al-Quran semasa rawatan		
5. Masyarakat Melayu lebih banyak mengamalkan perubatan moden / tradisional / lain-lain:		

**Bahagian C: Sila tick (/) yang berkenaan**

Pernyataan	Setuju	Kurang Setuju	Tidak Setuju	Tidak Pasti
6. Sesetengah perubatan tradisional berunsur syirik (seperti melibatkan jin dan syaitan)				
7. Perubatan tradisional digalakkan dalam Islam				
8. Perubatan moden digalakkan dalam Islam				
9. Perubatan moden adalah lebih berkesan berbanding tradisional				
10. Perubatan tradisional adalah lebih berkesan berbanding moden				
11. Perubatan moden seharusnya diterapkan dengan unsur Islamik				
12. Perubatan tradisional seharusnya diterapkan dengan unsur Islamik				
13. Perubatan moden seharusnya digabungkan dengan perubatan tradisional dan juga Islam				
14. Perubatan Islam menggunakan ilmu perubatan moden				
15. Perubatan Islam menggunakan ilmu perubatan tradisional				